[English]

Identity Cards to Income-Tax Payers

345. SHRI PANKAJ CHOWDHARY : Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Union Government propose to issue new identity cards for the Income-tax payers;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the time by which the final decision is likely to be taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE AND MINISTER OF COMPANY AFFAIRS (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM) : (a) to (c). Yes, Sir. As a part of the Comprehensive computerisation programme of the Income-Tax Department laminated Permanent Account Number Cards to all income tax payers are being issued in the three city regions of Delhi, Mumbai and Madras initially.

Meeting with Agriculturists

346. DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY : Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Finance Minister has recently met a group of agriculturists and sought their suggestions on the farm sector;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the details of the suggestions accepted and likely to be implemented?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE AND MINISTER OF COMPANY AFFAIRS (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM) (a) Yes Sir

(b) The pre-budget meeting drew attention to a number of issues such as the need for enhanced investment, improvement in rural infrastructure, removal of restrictions on movement of agricultural products and rationalisation of duties on inputs

(c) The relevant suggestions/deliberations made in the pre-budget meeting with FM are carefully considered for the budgetary exercise.

Privatisation of Banks and F.Is

347 SHRI S D N R WADIYAR : Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government propose to privatise some public sector banks and financial institutions,

(b) if so, the details of such banks and financial institutions;

(c) the reasons for taking such a decision, and

(d) the steps taken in that direction so far?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE AND MINISTER OF COMPANY AFFAIRS (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM) : (a) There is no proposal under consideration of the Government at present to privatise the public sector banks and financial institutions viz. Industrial Development Bank of India, Industrial Reconstruction Bank of India, Export-Import Bank of India, National Housing Bank and National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development.

(b) to (d). Do not arise.

Setting up of National Rural Bank

348. SHRI MULLAPPALLY RAMACHANDRAN : Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government have taken any final decision for setting up of the proposed National Rural Bank;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the proposed places where the Bank's branches are to be set up initially; and

(c) the steps taken so far towards setting up of the Bank?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE AND MINISTER OF COMPANY AFFAIRS (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM) : (a) to (c). After considering a number of alternative models for restructuring Regional Rural Banks (RRBs) including National Rural Bank, it has been decided to revamp the RRBs by cleansing of their balance sheets on a 'Stand alone' basis. Accordingly, in pursuance of an announcement by the Finance Minister in his Budget Speech on 28.02.94, 49 of the 196 RRBs were taken up in the course of 1994-95 for comprehensive restructuring including cleansing up of their balance sheets and infusion of fre.. capital. Equity support has been released for another batch of 53 RRBs in 1995-96 The objective is to transform presently weak and ailing RRBs into financially viable and effective instruments of decentralised rural banking.

Widening of NH No. 5

349. SHRI R. SAMBASIVA RAO :

SHRIMATI VASUNDHARA RAJE :

Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Union Government have taken up any programme of four-laning of Vijayawada-Madras National Highway No 5, Delhi-Ajmer via Jaipur and Delhi-Bombay National Highway No. 8 in view of regular traffic congestion effecting trade and commerce movement,

(b) if so, whether the land acquisition work for four-laning has taken place and if so, the progress in this regard,